

Docket Item # 8
BAR CASE #2007-0272

BAR Meeting
April 16, 2008

ISSUE: Signage and Awning
APPLICANT: Wing C. Tse
LOCATION: 828 North Washington Street
ZONE: CD-X/Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application with the condition that the awning be covered with a canvas type fabric, to be reviewed and approved by Staff.

JANUARY 16, 2008: Deferred prior to the public hearing for lack of public notice.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

Insert sketch map here

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness to modify the rooftop sign and the free standing sign at 828 North Washington Street by replacing the existing text with the name of the new restaurant at this location, "Asian Wok Café." The signs will continue to be red letters outlined in neon on a white background. The application also includes a request for after-the-fact approval of a new forest green vinyl awning. When the awning was first installed the restaurant's phone number was included on the awning; it was subsequently covered with spray paint because it did not comply with the *Design Guidelines*.

II. HISTORY:

828 North Washington Street was originally constructed as Little Tavern building, a programmatic building type. The Little Tavern hamburger shop was constructed as part of a regional chain of 34 restaurants in the Washington and Baltimore area beginning in 1928. The Art Deco/Tudor cottage design, with green and white panels, became an icon for the company. The new style was created by architect George E. Stone and engineer Charles E. Brooks of the Stonebrook Corporation in Baltimore (see *Trans-Lux*, Vol. I, Issue 2, Feb., 1983). This example in Alexandria was constructed in 1940 (Building Permit #2542, 5/22/1940) as a brick building. It was resurfaced with the characteristic green and white porcelain enamel panels of the Little Tavern chain in 1959 (Building Permit #15009, 5/27/1959). The green awnings were approved by the Board in 1982 (Building Permit #38358, 12/14/1982).

The George Washington Memorial Parkway, which opened in 1932, celebrated the new personal freedom allowed by cars for scenic leisure as well as commercial transportation activities. Sleek new service stations and fast food restaurants were a response to these new uses. The building itself became a billboard, and roadside architecture entered the automobile age. This change from pedestrian to automobile scale signs, as represented by Little Tavern, appropriately represents this period on the Parkway. Very few Alexandria examples remain of this architectural era.

The Board has approved a number of relatively minor alterations to this building in the last decade. Most recently in 2005, the Board approved the change out of the lettering on the freestanding and the roof signs from Jerry's Subs Pizza to Merry's Subs Pizza (BAR Case #2005-00226, 10/19/2005). In 1993, the Board approved the resurfacing of the historic signs from the original Little Tavern logo to the name of the new restaurant, Friendly Tavern (BAR Case #93-8, 1/6/1993). The following year the Board again approved the refacing of the historic signs and restoration of the neon tubing on the freestanding and roof mounted sign with the name Hogs on the Hill (BAR Case #94-104, 10/5/1994). The signs for Jerry's Subs were approved by the Board in 1995 (BAR Case #95-189, 12/20/95). The Board approved outdoor seating and a dumpster enclosure in 2000 (BAR Case #2000-037, 6/21/00).

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed replacement lettering on the existing noncomplying free standing sign and roof

sign complies with zoning ordinance requirements.

The replacement letters will be the same size and type style as the existing letters on the signs. Staff has no objections to this replacement which preserves these iconic existing rooftop and freestanding signs. Staff has no objection to recovering the existing awning; however, the vinyl material used to cover the awning is inconsistent with the *Design Guidelines*, which recommends a canvas type fabric. Staff recommends that the awning be covered with a canvas-like material in a dark green color, to be reviewed and approved by Staff.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the condition that the awning be covered with a canvas type fabric, to be reviewed and approved by Staff.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F - finding

Code Enforcement:

F-1 The applicant shall obtain a sign permit and an electrical permit for the proposed neon sign and/ or wall lettering.

C-1 Wall letters / signs must comply with USBC [H103-H111] Please indicate the method to be used for anchoring the letters to the wall.

Historic Alexandria:

Comments pending.